

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Fighters against US police brutality visit revolutionary Cuba
— PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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As capitalist crisis deepens openings for SWP grow

BY MAGGIE TROWE

The biggest economic and political crisis the capitalist rulers have faced in our lifetimes is deepening. This crisis for the capitalist class and its parties creates significant openings to win workers toward the Socialist Workers Party.

That's what SWP members find as they campaign to build the party in working-class neighborhoods, as well as at picket lines and factory gates across the country.

Knocking on doors in working-class towns across New Jersey, party members have been going to a wide range of neighborhoods, meeting workers they will keep in touch with in the future and working to put Alyson Kennedy and Osborne Hart, the SWP candidates for U.S. president and vice president, on the ballot.

"My husband can't work because he was injured on the job," said pharmaceutical worker Emilia Bautista on her porch in Rahway, New Jersey, May 22. "I'm the breadwinner, and it's hard to pay the \$12,000 a year property tax and other bills. I like what you're saying about building a working-class movement."

Hart, SWP candidate for U.S. Sen-
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Unions striking Verizon broaden labor support

1,700 CWA members also strike AT&T in Calif.



CWA Local 2108

Some 1,000 striking Communications Workers rally with supporters across from White House May 19. They are fighting Verizon's concession demands and job cuts.

BY CANDACE WAGNER

NEW YORK — Union solidarity has increased for the 39,000 union members on strike since April 13 in nine eastern states and the District of Columbia against telecommunications giant Verizon.

In Rockland County, north of New York City, the strike has elicited sustained support, and strikers have lent their solidarity to other fights in the

county. Passersby frequently honk their horns and give a thumbs-up to the picket lines of more than 60 strikers at the new Verizon store in the Nanuet Mall. On May 12 teachers and other unionists joined a solidarity action there.

On April 19 Verizon strikers had
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Washington's Mideast crisis result of losing Cold War

BY MAGGIE TROWE

The U.S. military assassinated the leader of the Afghan Taliban, Mullah Akhtar Mansour, in a drone strike on a Pakistani highway May 21. Like the cold-blooded killing of Osama bin Laden in 2011, which led to the splintering and spread of al-Qaeda forces — it's the kind of operation that's been a hallmark of Barack Obama's administration, with the potential for similarly destabilizing repercussions.

The drone killing is the latest example of how Washington's course to try to stabilize the Mideast and beyond in its imperialist interests is fraught with obstacles, the unintended consequences of U.S. imperialism's actions in the region since the implosion of the Soviet Union.

This can be seen in Iraq, where the U.S.-backed government of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi is wracked by crisis. Plummeting oil prices and the costly and destructive war against Islamic State have crippled the economy. Some 4 million Iraqis are displaced.

Since last summer, reacting against
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Socialist Workers Party campaigns among Minnesota workers, farmers



Militant/Dan Fein

Dick Fenner, left, who works for a dairy farmer, talks with SWP campaigner Chris Hoepfner while waiting to deliver livestock outside packinghouse in Long Prairie, Minnesota, May 23.

BY TONY LANE

MINNEAPOLIS — "None of these politicians come through with their promises. We need to do something different to be heard," Guadalupe Pinto told Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy as she and supporters knocked on doors

in Hutchinson, Minnesota, May 22. "I would be happy to collaborate with you," Pinto said, and took a handful of petitions and campaign flyers to give to friends and for her husband to take to work.

Two other workers who recently
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Puerto Rico debt crisis: product of US capitalism's colonial rule

BY SETH GALINSKY

President Barack Obama and congressional leaders have reached agreement on a "Puerto Rico Over-

**END US COLONIAL
RULE IN PUERTO RICO!**
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sight, Management, and Economic Stability Act" that would put control of virtually all of Puerto Rico's financial decisions in the hands of an ap-

pointed board.

The stated purpose of the bill is to "bring lawful order to chaos" in paying the U.S. colony's estimated \$70 billion debt. Ever since June last year, when Gov. Alejandro García said the debt was unpayable, wealthy bondholders and hedge funds have been jockeying to get paid first, to minimize the amount of any "haircut" — debt reduction — they have to accept, and to make sure working people get

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Rail union says two-man crew would've averted 2015 train crash

BY JANET POST

PHILADELPHIA — The National Transportation Safety Board issued a report May 17 blaming Amtrak engineer Brandon Bostian's "loss of situational awareness" for the Amtrak 188 passenger train crash here May 12, 2015. "His attention was diverted to

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Warehouse workers picket against Cal Cartage firings

Walmart worker speaks out against firing, gains support

Gov't ‘bathroom’ directive sets back fight for solidarity

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

On May 13, the Barack Obama administration issued a directive mandating that transgendered students be allowed to use whatever bathroom they choose. The 26-page guideline, jointly issued by the federal departments of Education and Justice, says that “as soon as a child’s parent or legal guardian asserts a gender identity for the student that differs from previous representations or

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records” the child is to be treated accordingly in all public schools. Obama presents this as a major civil rights accomplishment of his presidency.

It’s in workers’ interest to oppose all forms of discrimination in hiring, housing and access to education and to oppose violence and harassment of anyone for their sexual orientation or how they view their gender. But that’s not what this “guideline” is about.

In addition, imposing broad social policy changes through executive decree is an obstacle to the discussion and debate needed to forge working-class unity. Relying on presidential decrees undermines constitutional protections the working class needs *against* the government and is an obstacle to independent working-class political action.

The federal action follows passage of the North Carolina Equal Access to Public Accommodations Act, adopted March 23. This legislation, also called HB2, has become known as “the bathroom law” because of a provision that requires multiple occupancy bathrooms

and locker rooms in schools and other government buildings to be used only by individuals of one biological sex.

The law was adopted in response to an ordinance passed by the Charlotte City Council in February. This law barred discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, but also included the use of restrooms, sparking controversy.

Over the last five years, many city and county governments have adopted ordinances prohibiting discrimination against gays and transgender people in housing and employment. They reflect changing attitudes within the population and deserve support, as they strike a blow against prejudice and strengthen the capacity of the working class to take the moral high ground and to fight for the interests of all working people.

HB2 not only banned opening bathrooms to individuals of the opposite sex, but overturned local anti-discrimination laws. It also banned any local measures to set a minimum wage higher than the federal level of \$7.25 an hour, saying this is to prevent jeopardizing “the competitive position of North Carolina business and industry.” Neither Obama nor the Justice Department have commented on this aspect of the law.

The Justice Department sued the state of North Carolina, saying HB2 violates federal civil rights legislation. The state government countersued.

U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch equated the fight over restroom access by transgendered individuals to the fight against racist Jim Crow laws. This comparison is “spot on,” wrote *Washington Post* columnist Janell Ross.

Abortion rights supporters protest in Oklahoma



Oklahoma Coalition for Reproductive Justice

Some 25 supporters of women’s right to choose abortion rallied in front of the state Capitol in Oklahoma City May 21 against a bill that would have made performing an abortion a felony punishable by up to three years in prison. The day before the protest Gov. Mary Fallin, a staunch opponent of abortion rights, vetoed the bill, which was intended to challenge the Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision. “We are a voice for public opposition” to attacks on women’s rights, said Rev. Dwight Welch of the Oklahoma Coalition for Reproductive Justice, which called the protest.

— ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

This is a false analogy. Jim Crow segregation was used to oppress Black workers and farmers and to foster racism to divide the working class. It was a key tool to push down the value of labor of the working class and boost the profits of the propertied rulers. Its overthrow was the result of a massive struggle, a revolution that won millions to its banner. The laws that followed codified what had already been won.

Obama’s executive order undermines the fight against prejudice and it does not protect transgendered individuals. It paints working people as a backward, reactionary mass that needs to be ordered to do what’s right.

“Kids who have a different sexual orientation or are transgender,” Obama told BuzzFeed News, “are subject to a lot of bullying.”

But most workers oppose violence and bullying. And there has been a sea change in the United States over the last several decades, with growing support for women’s rights and opposition to discrimination against gays, lesbians and transgender people.

That this order has little do with protecting anyone is shown by the reaction of federal authorities last year to the Palatine Township High School near Chicago. School officials offered a private changing room to a biologically male student who identifies as female. The Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights ruled that the offer was a violation of gender equality law.

The attempt to force schools to follow these guidelines also ignores the right to privacy, especially of women who wish to change clothes or use bathroom facilities without the presence of males.

According to Obama, ultimately the “courts will affirm or reject how we see the issue.” The president and the meritocratic layer of lawyers, professionals and non-governmental organizations he is part of see the use of executive orders and court decisions as the arbiter of all political questions.

By making “bathroom choice” the issue, the proponents of the Obama directive are undermining the fight against discrimination based on race, gender or sexual orientation.

THE MILITANT

Oppose gov’t frame-ups, prison abuse!

The ‘Militant’ covers the fights of workers behind bars — from prisoners on strike in Alabama to Gary Tyler’s release after almost 42 years. Cops, courts and prisons are used to intimidate and break workers, especially those who protest capitalism’s injustices and exploitation.



Joan Grisworld/Handout via Reuters
Gary Tyler, framed in 1974, won release from Louisiana prison April 29.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*’s views. These are expressed in editorials.

Openings to build SWP

Continued from front page
ate in New York Jacob Perasso and supporters will file 1,440 signatures, well over the 800 required, in Trenton May 26 to put Hart and Kennedy on the ballot.

Campaigning to get on the ballot is also underway in Minnesota, Washington and Tennessee. The Socialist Workers Party takes advantage of these efforts to discuss with thousands of working people the economic and political crisis of capitalism, and above all the possibility of building a working-class movement capable of displacing the dictatorship of capital and replacing it with a workers and farmers government whose foundation is moral values of human solidarity.

Biggest crisis of capitalism in decades

After decades of assaults on unions, wages and working conditions, which have deepened since the financial crisis opened in 2007, millions of workers are fed up with bourgeois politics-as-usual. Against the backdrop of the 2016 elections, there is growing ferment and discussion on how to break with the past and what to do.

The crisis manifests itself in both the Republican and Democratic parties. Despite virulent attacks by liberals, radicals and conservatives alike, and the Republican and Democratic Party establishments, Donald Trump, who attracts huge crowds of workers, has routed 16 opponents and all but secured the Republican nomination. The hysteria around his campaign stems not from the rulers’ fear of the New York real estate magnate but from their fear of the active entry on the political scene of the workers who come to his rallies, and what

that portends for rising resistance to the bosses’ attacks.

Republican Party leaders are increasingly capitulating to Trump’s victory and lining up behind his run to November. They know that when all is said and done, he’ll do as the ruling families want.

The battle for the Democratic Party nomination continues. Front-runner Hillary Clinton, wife of two-term president Bill Clinton, makes a negative impression on 61 percent of voters, according to a May 18 Fox News poll. The Clintons’ anti-labor legacy — from “ending welfare as we know it” to attacks on immigrant workers and soaring incarceration rates — doesn’t sit well with many workers.

She announced she will put Bill Clinton in charge of the economic revitalization of the U.S., which is not reassuring to miners and other workers who faced job cuts and cuts in social programs for much of the 1990s.

Clinton’s rival, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, has won a majority of the recent Democratic party primaries and drawn big crowds with his refrain that the economy and political establishments are “rigged.” Sanders has vowed to stay in the race through the July Democratic Party convention, and many Sanders supporters say they won’t vote for Clinton if she is the party’s nominee.

Taking its campaign to the working class, the Socialist Workers Party says working people need to break from all the parties and candidates of the capitalist system and chart a course toward organizing independently and taking political power themselves.

The SWP is organizing an Active Workers Conference June 16-18 in Oberlin, Ohio. This will be an opportunity for workers from across the U.S. and from other countries to discuss these questions, exchange experiences and arm ourselves politically.

Beth Cribbs, a member of United Steelworkers Local 1196 in Brackenridge, Pennsylvania, who was among 2,200 unionists locked out by Allegheny Technologies for more than six months, is planning to attend.

Cribbs, a shipper and crane operator, told the *Militant* that since the lockout ended the pace of work is heavy because ATI refuses to hire enough workers. “A lot of people are working 12 to 16-hour days, seven days a week.”

“We miss being on the picket line,” she said.

Coming out of the conference the party plans to field teams of campaigners across the country in small towns and large cities. To volunteer to help out, contact SWP branches in your area (see list on page 8).

Nearly 1,700 ‘Militant’ readers

The international drive to win 1,550 *Militant* readers, which was extended one week, has gone over the top, with 1,686 subscriptions! The *Militant* Fighting Fund has ended, and to allow time for contributions to be mailed in, we will post the final chart in the next issue. More than \$105,000 has arrived so far.

“The *Militant* is essential for understanding what’s happening in the world from a working-class perspective,” Jacques Fontaine, vice president of Public Service Alliance of Canada Local 10333 at Montreal’s Vieux-Port tourist attraction, told the paper. The 350 union members are fighting for \$15



Militant/Lea Sherman
Jacob Perasso, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate in New York, talks to Martina Spalikeo, a licensed vocational nurse and student, on her porch in Kearny, New Jersey, May 22.

an hour. “I’m happy to have discovered this paper and to realize I’m not alone in the struggle for social progress. To the contrary, I realize now that I’m part of a

growing movement.”

He renewed his subscription and bought new subs for relatives in Montreal and Manitoba.

Socialist Workers Party candidate backs strike at Washington college

BY JOHN STUDER

AUBURN, Washington — Chanting “No more cuts!” teachers, adjuncts and students at Green River College’s three area campuses walked out May 23. The action began a three-day strike to protest moves by the community college’s administration to eliminate 11 programs, fire faculty and attack the Green River United Faculty Coalition, Local 2195 of the American Federation of Teachers.

Osborne Hart, Socialist Workers Party candidate for vice president, and campaign supporters joined the spirited action. Hart marched on the picket line as part of a four-day visit to Washington. He also spoke to a Seattle rally of over 60 people and joined efforts to put the Socialist Workers Party presidential ticket — himself and Alyson Kennedy for president — on the ballot.

Twenty-two of the 50 protesters signed petitions to put the socialist candidates on the ballot. There are over 500 teachers and 8,000 students at the school. The college carried out a series of cuts last year, including an auto body repair program run by the then president of Local

2195. The strike followed more than a month of student and faculty protests.

“The school is breaking the union contract by cutting classes and getting rid of teachers,” student Jessica Dowell told Hart. “They’re cutting the math and writing resource centers.”

Over the past week here more than 900 people have signed petitions and many have picked up the *Militant*, got copies of Pathfinder books on revolutionary working-class history and politics, and exchanged information to keep in touch.



Militant/Dean Denno
SWP candidate Hart, right, joins teachers picket line at Green River College in Auburn, Washington, May 23.

Spring subscription drive			
April 2 - May 24 (Final)			
Country	Quota	Sold	%
UNITED STATES			
Atlanta	100	111	111%
Chicago	125	137	110%
Lincoln*	17	22	129%
Los Angeles	200	205	103%
Miami	50	53	106%
New York	220	222	101%
Oakland	110	133	121%
Philadelphia	90	103	114%
Seattle	100	121	121%
Twin Cities	80	86	108%
Washington	115	94	82%
Total U.S.	1207	1287	107%
UNITED KINGDOM			
Manchester	60	71	118%
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Total U.K.	135	153	113%
CANADA			
Montreal	55	59	107%
Calgary	45	48	107%
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AUSTRALIA	60	60	100%
NEW ZEALAND	50	57	114%
PRISONERS	15	22	147%
Total	1567	1686	109%
Should be	1550	1550	100%
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Active Workers Conference

Oberlin, Ohio, June 16-18

Classes

Puerto Rico Is a US Colony: SWP’s Communist Continuity in the Fight for Independence

The Coming Apart of Imperialism’s Post-“US-Lost-the-Cold-War” Order in the Middle East

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Capitalist Nation States and Fracturing of the European Union: Damned If They Do, Damned If They Don’t

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For more information contact the SWP in your area (see list on page 8)

Rail union: need 2-man crew

Continued from front page

an emergency situation with a nearby SEPTA train that had made an emergency stop after being struck by a projectile,” the report stated.

Eight passengers were killed and 200 injured when the train, headed from Washington, D.C., to New York, derailed on a curve while travelling more than twice the 50 mph speed limit.

Bostian, 33, an experienced and respected engineer, has been suspended without pay since the crash.

Minutes prior to the derailment two engineers operating trains nearby reported projectiles hitting their cabs — causing “radio chatter,” as the report put it. The engineer’s window on a SEPTA commuter train broke and an Amtrak Acela train window was shattered.

A pattern of cracks in the windshield of Amtrak 188 indicate it may also have been hit by a projectile. Bostian, who has no recollection of the crash, was found with a head gash.

The NTSB report ruled out mechanical failure, weather or track conditions as causes. Bostian tested negative for drugs and alcohol and was not using his cell phone.

Need two workers in train cab

Rail unionists, who have long called for two people in the train cab and “positive train control” measures to prevent excess speed, are protesting the effort to scapegoat the engineer.

“Terms like ‘the loss of situational awareness’ attempt to place blame on the locomotive engineer, without considering that any human being can be given too many tasks at any given time,” Dennis Pierce, national president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, said in a May 19 statement. “If a second engineer as necessitated in many areas of Amtrak had been present to assist the engineer of train 188 in managing the multiple tasks confronting him, there would have been no accident.”

“The NTSB ignores completely the fact that there was a single employee alone in the cab, with no one to assist him in a distracting situation,” said a May 17 statement by Railroad Workers United, a group that includes members of several rail unions.

“In the four most high-profile passenger train wrecks in recent years, ALL of them had just one employee alone in the cab of the locomotive. And it is quite

likely that ALL of them could have been prevented had there been two employees in the cab.”

When the government-funded passenger line was created in the 1970s, Amtrak locomotive cabs were required to have at least an engineer and a fireman. But in the name of reducing costs, Amtrak has refused since 1983, when Congress ended the requirement, to crew Northeast Corridor train cabs with more than the engineer.

Rail unionists point to the need to install Positive Train Control — a system that automatically brakes a train that exceeds the speed limit if the engineer does not respond — on all tracks. PTC was not installed on the northbound rails at the time of the 188 crash. “Without question, the accident would not have occurred if a combination of PTC and two-person train crews were in use,” the BLET states.

Congress has moved back the deadline for rail companies to complete installation of PTC until at least 2018. The NTSB report recommended training engineers to manage “multiple concurrent tasks and prolonged, atypical situations” and reiterated demands for inward-outward facing cameras and recording devices in cabs, higher quality crash-resistant train windows and use of seat belts. For years, rail unions have opposed cab cameras, insisting what’s needed is two-person engine crews.

California blueberry pickers strike, vote in union



United Farm Workers

BAKERSFIELD, California — Farmworkers picket during May 16-18 strike by about 400 blueberry pickers against Klein Management in McFarland, California, 25 miles north of here. Within a few days a union election was set, and on May 21 workers voted in the United Farm Workers, 347 to 68.

Some of the workers traveled that evening to the 20th UFW convention taking place here. “We started out getting \$1 a pound,” José Hernández, 30, one of the blueberry pickers, said. “Then they went down to 95 cents, 85, 80, 75 and finally to 60 on Monday. We went on strike. It was too low.”

“As the volume of blueberries getting to market increases, the price per pound drops,” a company press statement said. “Such an adjustment is common, and happens every season, based upon changing market conditions.”

Workers at the farm said other issues were dirty bathrooms, lack of water in the fields and lack of respect from the foreman.

— LAURA GARZA

Unions striking Verizon broaden labor support

Continued from front page

joined a rally in support of teachers at Felix Festa middle school in West Nyack. Teachers in the Clarkstown school district there have been working without a contract since August 31, 2015.

National actions May 21

May 21 was a national “Kids and Families Day of Action” for the striking members of the Communications Workers of America and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Verizon’s landline, internet and television divisions. Activities took place at Verizon Wireless stores, both in states affected by the strike and in other parts of the country. The majority of workers in the wireless section are not unionized. The store pickets build public awareness of the strike and ask people not to patronize Verizon.

In Philadelphia, more than 75 strikers and supporters rallied in front of the

Cottman Ave. Verizon Wireless store. Among them were Ray Applegate, 19, and Dylan Hargrove, 20, who are part of the growing “term” workforce there — workers hired for up to 36-month terms. Verizon can end their employment any time after six months, they told the *Militant*. No term goes past 36 months. No regular full-time workers have been hired in over 10 years in the area, they said.

“A big part of the fight is to end the ‘term’ category,” Applegate said. “Verizon is using it to try and break the union. But of the 30 term workers at my garage — about half the workforce — only one has crossed the picket line.”

“They aren’t proposing cutting the payouts for retirees,” Chris Wackerman, CWA unit 15 president told Ginny Port, a CWA member who retired from Verizon in 1996. “But they want retirees and active workers to pay over \$100 a month for medical coverage, and to pay deductibles of several thousand dollars, which will cut your retirement money overall.” One striker, on hearing that a retiree was at the rally, called out, “You fought for us — now we’re fighting for you. We’re all in this together.”

The courts are on the bosses’ side. Eighteen union members had been picketing this large store, six at each entrance, Wackerman said. “But Verizon lawyers convinced the judge they only use one door, so the sheriff’s department cut us down to six pickets, even though we see them using all three doors.”

In a related struggle, 1,700 AT&T workers organized by CWA Local 9509 in the San Diego area launched a “grievance” strike May 19. The union contract for 15,000 AT&T West workers in California and Nevada expired April 10. They face concession demands similar to those the Verizon strikers are opposing — increased medical costs, a wage

increase that doesn’t meet the rising cost of living and job security. CWA District 9, which includes the AT&T workers, is encouraging members to donate to the Verizon Striking Families Fund.

Send donations to the Verizon Striking Families Solidarity Fund, c/o CWA, 501 3rd Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20001, or go to <http://www.cwa-union.org/> to make an online contribution.

Duane Stilwell in Nyack, New York, and John Staggs in Philadelphia contributed to this article.



BY JAMES HARRIS

WASHINGTON — In a day of action called by Communications Workers locals here, nearly 1,000 Verizon strikers and supporters picketed the F street Verizon Wireless store May 19, virtually closing the store. After the picket, red-shirted strikers marched to the White House, then held a rally across street in Lafayette Park.

Unions participating included SEIU 32BJ, UNITE HERE, the Amalgamated Transit Union, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the American Postal Workers Union, the United Food and Commercial Workers and the Office and Professional Employees International Union.

“Many workers are forced to work 12-hour days plus weekends and holidays, because there aren’t enough technicians,” striker Michelle Carter, who has worked for Verizon and its predecessors for 43 years, told the *Militant*. “They should hire more.”

“We just want to keep what we have, our retirement benefits and health care,” service technician Ronald Leatherwood said. “A few people have crossed the picket line, but this strike is really strong.”

in New International #14

The Clintons’ Antilabor Legacy: Roots of 2008 World Financial Crisis



“The Clinton administration consolidated an anti-working-class shift in Democratic Party domestic policy that increased the political convergence of the two leading parties of the employing class.”

— Jack Barnes

pathfinderpress.com

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CANADA

Montreal

As Washington Increases Combat Role, U.S. Government Seeks to Stabilize Imperialist Order in Mideast. Speaker: Beverly Bernardo, Communist League. Sat., June 4, 7:30 p.m. 7107 St. Denis, Suite 204. Tel.: (514) 272-5840.

UNITED KINGDOM

Manchester

U.S. Elections Highlight Crisis in Capitalist Politics. Speaker: Caroline Bellamy, Communist League. Sat., June 4, 6:30 p.m. Room 301, Hilton House, 26-28 Hilton St. Tel.: (016) 1478-2496.

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help the *Militant* cover labor struggles around the world!

This column gives a voice to those engaged in battle and building solidarity today — including unionists striking Verizon and US Foods, construction workers demanding safe conditions and workers fighting for \$15 an hour and a union. I invite those involved in workers’ battles to contact me at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018; or (212) 244-4899; or themilitant@mac.com. We’ll work together to ensure your story is told.

— Maggie Trowe

Warehouse workers picket against Cal Cartage firings

WILMINGTON, California — Two dozen California Cartage Co. workers picketed the company’s warehouse at the Port of Los Angeles May 10, demanding to be directly hired by the company as full-time employees. Cal Cartage workers have struck three times in the last eight months demanding direct hiring, safety shoes, paid sick days and job placement by seniority. In retaliation, the company forced all temporary workers to apply to a new agency April 30.

Between 75 and 100 workers were not rehired, Javier Rodriguez, an organizer for the Warehouse Workers Resource Center, told the *Militant*. “This is the beginning of a big battle against the company,” he told pickets. “We won’t stop until our coworkers are back to work. We want the company to be responsible to hire everybody directly.”

— Bill Arth

Walmart worker speaks out against firing, gains support

LEDUC, Alberta — André Ouimet, 78, was fired from his job as a Walmart greeter here at the end of April. While

at work April 23, he felt short of breath, left the store to get a fresh oxygen tank from his van and inadvertently put some toilet paper he had planned to buy in the vehicle. As soon as he realized the mistake, he informed management, paying for the item on his next break. On April 29, after being suspended without pay, he was told he would not be charged with theft, but was banned from all Walmart stores for two years.

Ouimet has used oxygen since shoveling snow in extreme winter cold in the Walmart parking lot a few years ago, his wife, Margit, told this reporter and Danyn Mitchell, both workers at another Walmart, who phoned to express solidarity May 5.

Coverage of the firing in the Leduc local paper and CBC Canada has won



Militant/Bill Arth

Warehouse workers picket California Cartage, near Los Angeles, May 10, demanding they be hired directly as permanent workers and protesting retaliatory firings after several strikes.

Ouimet support, and many workers protested on social media. One regular shopper who knows Ouimet started a GoFundMe page to raise money for him.

“He is extremely nice, always singing and friendly. He came right back and paid for it — you can’t find more honest than that,” Amanda Gilbert, a former Walmart worker, told the *Militant*. “I

worked for Walmart for six years. They say they’re family oriented. They mean the family that owns Walmart.”

“I’m not a thief and I’m not a liar” Ouimet said by phone May 17, adding that while he was grocery shopping, a woman recognized him and told him she is no longer shopping at Walmart as a protest against his firing.

— Katy LeRougetel

Minnesota frame-up of Somalis relies on FBI snitches

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON AND HELEN MEYERS

MINNEAPOLIS — “We are here, the mothers of these three boys, asking you to join in the outcry against this trial,” Fadumo Hussein told some 30 people protesting outside the U.S. District Courthouse here May 12 after the third day of the trial of her son, Guled Omar, 21. “We face a wall of lies with paid FBI informants and entrapment. They never went anywhere. They never did anything. And for this my son faces life in prison,” said Hussein at the rally, one of several demonstrations to take place at the courthouse.

Omar is on trial along with Abdirahman Daud and Mohamed Farah, both 22, accused of planning to travel to Syria to join Islamic State. The primary charges against them are “conspiracy to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organi-

zation” and “conspiracy to murder outside the United States,” which carries a possible sentence of life imprisonment. They were arrested in 2015 along with six others who pleaded guilty in exchange for deals from the government. The cops say a 10th youth they charged is now in Syria.

The government’s case is based on paid informers, wiretapping and video surveillance. Last August court documents revealed that one FBI snitch was paid \$41,000 to record conversations and told the men he had a connection that could provide false passports. In charging the three with “conspiracy,” the government avoids the need to prove they committed actions.

Abdullahi Yusuf, who was arrested in 2014 and agreed to testify against his friends in a plea agreement, took the stand on the fifth day of the trial.

Abdirahman Bashiir, the govern-

ment’s star witness, then testified for five days, explaining he was paid some \$119,000 for work with the FBI that included taping conversations and pushing a plan to leave the country that resulted in the arrest of Daud and Farah.

The largest courtroom was packed during the trial. On the first day U.S. District Judge Michael Davis rejected a motion from Farah’s attorney, Murad Mohammad, to withdraw from the case because of a “breakdown in communication.” Farah told the judge Mohammad pressured him to plead guilty.

Davis cautioned prospective jurists saying, “It’s terrorism. And everyone’s heard of that and everyone has certain thoughts about that.” A jury of eight men and eight women, all Caucasian, was selected.

In April, when one of the defense attorneys asked for an instruction to the jury that the men may have thought they were traveling abroad to fight to defend others, Davis replied, “I’m shutting the door on this. This is not a political trial.”

For years the FBI and other federal cop agencies have spied on and harassed the 75,000-strong Somali community here. They’ve seized on the arrests and recruitment efforts of reactionary groups such as Islamic State to intensify their probes. They also launched the Countering Violent Extremism pilot program, which promotes collaboration between the FBI and other police agencies and schools, community organizations and local officials in the Somali community, doling out grant money to selected groups.

“This trial is the latest attack on the rights of Somalis living here,” David Rosenfeld, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in Minnesota, told participants in a May 19 protest outside the courthouse. “The U.S. government and its political police, with their use of paid informers, entrapment and conspiracy charges, are setting a dangerous precedent that can be used against the labor movement and the entire working class.”

—CALENDAR—

NEW YORK

New York

Day of Solidarity with the Fight for Puerto Rican Independence.

Speakers: María de Lourdes Santiago, Puerto Rican Independence Party; Dr. Héctor Pesquera Sevillano, co-president of the Hostos National Independence Movement. Sponsor: A Call to Action on Puerto Rico. Fri., June 17, 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. *1199SEIU, 310 W 43rd St.*

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



June 7, 1991

The wanton brutality of the South Korean police in killing Kang Kyung Dae, a 20-year-old student, unleashed years of pent-up popular anger and hatred for the U.S.-backed South Korean regime.

The May 24 *New York Times* called the current protests in South Korea a “violent annual show” and the *Wall Street Journal* dismissed protesters as “hard core radicals.” But this presentation passed on as fact is at variance with reality.

Today, hundreds of thousands of Koreans in the South are aiming their fire squarely at President Roh Tae Woo’s regime, which despite democratic pretenses, has been an obstacle to conquering greater democratic rights, social justice, and the reunification of Korea.



June 6, 1966

Three hundred people jammed into the Militant Labor Forum Hall May 27 to attend a memorial meeting for Leo Bernard, the Detroit socialist who was shot down by a fanatical anti-communist. The meeting was sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance.

The speakers’ list, and the audience itself, represented the broadest act of left-wing unity that has been achieved in this country in more than three decades. This was also true of the messages.

All of the speakers were agreed that the Detroit shooting was not simply the act of a deranged individual, but a product of the anti-communist poison pumped into American society over years.



June 7, 1941

Now pending in the House of Representatives are two bills which would authorize the F.B.I. and other police agencies to engage in wiretapping. Representative Hobbs, sponsor of one of the bills, is also parent of the “concentration camp” bill for aliens.

In the last war, although wiretapping was supposedly illegal, the Department of Justice practiced it freely. For every case of espionage and treason prosecuted against German agents or sympathizers there were hundreds of raids against “reds” and militant workers. The campaign of intimidation, mass raids and strikebreaking, with wiretapping as one of its main weapons was directed at that time by the same J. Edgar Hoover who now heads the F.B.I. Nor did he stop when peace came.

Fighters against US police brutality visit Cuba

Delegation marches in Havana on May Day, learns about values of socialist revolution

BY RÓGER CALERO
AND JACOB PERASSO

HAVANA — “If we had been living in Cuba my son would still be alive,” Andree Penix-Smith told leaders of the Federation of Cuban Women (FCM) here May 3. Her son, Justin Smith Jr., was killed by the police in 1998 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She and other close relatives of victims of police killings in the United States visited Cuba to learn firsthand about the gains made by working people in this country through their socialist revolution, and to speak about ongoing fights against cop brutality in the U.S.

The Federation of Cuban Women and the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) hosted the one-week tour, which included fighters against police abuses from New York, Detroit, Chicago and Oakland, California.

FMC General Secretary Teresa Amarrelle Boué welcomed the delegation at the headquarters of the organization. She described the social and economic inequality that existed in Cuba prior to the revolutionary overthrow of a U.S.-backed dictatorship in January 1959, and the gains women, blacks and working people made with the revolution. During the two-hour exchange, members of the U.S. delegation described the circumstances in which their relatives were killed, and their efforts over many years demanding the indictment, conviction and jailing of the officers responsible for these and other killings.

Their fight struck a chord among many they spoke with here. The courage of Cuban mothers whose children were killed under the military regime of Fulgencio Batista before 1959 is part of their revolutionary heritage. Many Cubans are also aware of police

brutality in the U.S. through news reports and experiences of relatives living there.

The visit began with joining the march in Havana of hundreds of thousands of Cuban workers and students in the celebration of International Workers Day on May 1, an annual mobilization of support for the revolution. Hundreds of contingents marched across the Plaza of the Revolution with colorful homemade banners identifying their unions and workplaces amid chanting, singing and dancing.

“I’ve never seen anything like it! Workers marching without being surrounded by the police,” said Juanita Young after the massive celebration. Her son, Malcolm Ferguson, was killed by New York police in 2000. Many Cubans approached the delegation during the march to ask about their struggles, shake their hands and take pictures.

Members of the delegation spoke at an international conference in solidarity with Cuba the next day, and displayed banners they had brought reading “Mothers Cry for Justice,” and “Families against Police Brutality in the United States in Solidarity with Cuba: End the US Embargo against Cuba.” They received a standing ovation from the more than 1,600 delegates from some 20 countries present.

Congratulating the Cuban people for building a society where working people come first, Iris Baez told the conference that “the killings of our sons in the United States” must stop and “capitalism is not for working people.” Her son Anthony Baez was killed by New York cop Francis Livoti in 1994. Three other members of the delegation — Juanita



Young, Anita Wills and Nellie Bailey — also addressed the gathering.

Different values

The tour included visits to the Orlando Pantoja Elementary School, a neighborhood family center run by the FMC and community projects that organize activities and work closely with local residents, especially with teenage youth and the elderly. They also visited the Literacy Campaign Museum and met with U.S. students at the Latin American School of Medicine, which has trained more than 23,000 students from all over the world, including from the United States, free of charge.

Leaders of the community programs described the attention paid by mass organizations like the Federation of Cuban Women and neighborhood committees to social questions such as domestic violence, prenatal care, children falling behind in school and crime prevention. “In socialist Cuba our priority is the human being,” said the director of the Pogoletti Community Center, located in one of the oldest working-class neighborhoods in Havana, founded in 1911 for tobacco, factory and port workers. “From a very young age we are taught to respect, share and care for others.”

Victor Dreke, a leader of the Cuban Revolution for more than 50 years who fought in the Rebel Army and at the side of Che Guevara in the Congo in 1965, met with several of the delegates. Dreke described how as a teenager he had joined the revolutionary movement that overthrew a regime marked by brutality, corruption and subservience to the interests of U.S. imperialism and Cuba’s landlords and capitalists.

“Many trade union leaders and young people were killed by the Batista dictatorship,” said Dreke. “President Barack Obama asked us during his recent visit to Cuba to forget about the past, but how could we? It would be like asking you to forget about your sons.”

At the Literacy Campaign Museum the delegation saw displays of photos and other items from the 1961 campaign in which more than 100,000 volunteers, mostly teenagers, went into the coun-

tryside to teach reading and writing. At the time illiteracy, especially among women, was often well over 50 percent. Within a year the volunteers reduced illiteracy nationwide from 30 percent to 4 percent.

“What would inspire people so young to leave home and participate in something of so high a moral character, and that required so much discipline?” asked Young.

“The revolution transformed us,” replied Olga Santos, who took part in the literacy campaign when she was 13 years old. “People were inspired to participate, it was a way of contributing to the revolution.

“The discipline came from the commitment to fulfill the task ahead of us,” Santos added.

Supported the Cuban Five

A high point of the visit was a meeting with Fernando González, one of the five Cuban revolutionaries who were framed up by the U.S. government in 1998 for their work monitoring counter-revolutionary Cuban groups in Florida to prevent violent attacks on Cuba. He is currently ICAP’s vice president.

“I’ve been following your case for years,” said Young. “I lost my son to police murder, and I could not help thinking what the mothers of the Cuban Five were going through.”

The idea of relatives of victims of police brutality traveling to Cuba originated in October 2014 when Baez and Young spoke at an event in New York to extend support for the fight to free the Five. Young said there that she and other mothers should visit Cuba and meet the mothers of the Cuban Five. The following year, Baez hosted a meeting at her church in the Bronx where relatives of victims of cop killings from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania joined a panel with Maritzel González of the FMC.

In addition to the seven family members, participants in the trip included Jacob Perasso and Róger Calero from the Socialist Workers Party, who worked with the hosting organizations in Cuba and with Mothers Cry for Justice in



Relatives of victims of police brutality and others who are part of fight against cop violence in U.S. (above) joined May 1 International Workers Day march in Havana (left). Holding banner from left: Aaron Grable, Andree Penix-Smith, Juanita Young and Alyson Kennedy. Many Cubans came up to shake their hands. “I’ve never seen anything like it,” said Young. “Workers marching without being surrounded by the police.”

New York to coordinate aspects of the tour; Alyson Kennedy, who has been active in fights against police killings and torture in Chicago and is the SWP’s presidential candidate in 2016; and Nellie Bailey of the July 26 Coalition and the Harlem Tenants Council in New York. A project of the New York July 26 Coalition, the tour received the support of Cuba solidarity groups in several cities, as well as from individuals active in combatting police abuses.

“I’ve been fighting the government in the United States for 20 years to get justice for my son, and have yet to see the end of police brutality in our country,” Arnetta Grable told González. “I have joined with many other mothers around the country so that we can, in solidarity, bring an end to this terrible brutality suffered by our young people.” One of her sons, Lamar Wayne Grable, was killed by a Detroit cop in 1996 when he was going home after a party in a local church. Her other son, Aaron, has been active in the fight against police brutality and also joined the visit to Cuba.

Many members of the delegation take part in the National Stolen Lives Families Tour — a joint project of Mothers Cry for Justice and The Adam Project, Inc. led by Rev. Jerome McCorry based in Dayton, Ohio — through which they offer solidarity to families who have lost their loved ones to police killings across the country. Baez is also founder of the Anthony Baez Foundation, which likewise extends support to victims of police brutality and their families.

The Stolen Lives Families Tour recently organized trips to Cleveland and Chicago where they joined actions with relatives of Tamir Rice, 12, killed by police in Cleveland in 2014; Justus Howell, killed by the Zion, Illinois, cops in 2015; and others.

“We focus on the police but we’re aware that behind the police there is an entire system,” said Wills, pointing to how the government, courts and prison system work against working people, disproportionately those who are Black, Latino and Native American. Wills, who has a son in prison, is involved in the fight in California against solitary confinement in U.S. prisons.

“The years I spent in prison gave me the opportunity to be with many African Americans unjustly held in U.S.

prisons,” said González. “I learned about the reality of their communities, the reality in the United States, which is not the same one we see on television.” He thanked the relatives on behalf of himself and “my four brothers for your support to us, and for struggling.”

“It’s an honor to be in the same room

Puerto Rico debt crisis: product of US colonialism

Continued from front page
squeezed to maximize their profits.

The bondholders also want to get paid ahead of the \$40 billion in pension liabilities the government owes. The government missed a bond payment of \$422 million May 2. Another \$2 billion is due July 1.

Under the bipartisan deal, Obama will appoint a seven-member board with extraordinary powers to impose its will on Puerto Rico. The colony’s governor will be a non-voting member.

Like a bankruptcy court, the board would decide which debts get paid first and negotiate the size of any haircut.

Among the board’s powers:

- authority to force the sale of Puerto Rican government assets and to lay off government workers.
- authority to overturn any law or regulation that the board decides is “inconsistent” with its mission.
- enforcing laws that prohibit government employees from going on strike.
- imposing criminal penalties on anyone who fails to carry out the board’s decisions.

In addition, the bill allows the governor of Puerto Rico to lower the minimum wage for new hires for anyone under 25 years old.

García has stated his administration has an “adjustment plan” that is “similar to what the bill is calling for,” but opposes the appointed board making the decisions.

What it means to be a colony

Since 1898, when U.S. troops wrested control of Puerto Rico from the Spanish crown, the island’s resources and people have been a source of super-profits for U.S. capitalists. To mask that Puerto Rico is a colony, Washington refers to it as a self-governing territory or a “Commonwealth.”

Despite Spanish being the main lan-



Fernando González, one of Cuban Five, revolutionaries who spent decade and a half behind bars in U.S., signs Iris Baez’s shirt. “I have joined with mothers around the U.S. to bring an end to cop brutality,” Arnetta Grable, at left, told González.

speaking with you,” said Joshua Lopez. “You’re not only a hero here in Cuba but you’re a hero to a lot of us in America.” Lopez’s uncle, John Collado, was killed by a New York undercover cop in September 2011 when he tried to separate two people involved in a fight, not knowing one was a cop.

“This is going to continue in the U.S. no matter who is elected president. If we want to see these horrors go away it’s going to take a revolution, and real

leadership like that of Fidel and Raúl,” said Lopez.

“In Cuba they were fighting and fighting until they got change,” Juanita Young told the *Militant* after the visit. “Without this trip I would have never known another way of living. In the U.S., value is put on material things and it causes constant stress. They don’t do that in Cuba. Now that we are back we want to speak about what we learned on our trip.”

guage of its 3.5 million inhabitants, U.S. federal courts in Puerto Rico conduct their affairs in English. Under the 1920 Jones Act, all maritime cargo to the island has to be carried on U.S.-owned ships. This often means goods sail right past Puerto Rico, are transferred to U.S. ships in a U.S. port, and then sent back to be offloaded there.

The proposed fiscal board “confronts the problems created by colonialism with more colonialism,” María de Lourdes Santiago, the Puerto Rican Independence Party’s candidate for governor in the upcoming election, said March 28. “Puerto Rico does not have the necessary powers to protect its industry, to establish trade pacts with other countries, to apply for international financing deals.”

“Lack of respect”
The bill “shows a lack of respect,” long-time independence fighter Rafael Cancel Miranda told Telemundo April 26. “The only way that Puerto Ricans can resolve our problems is if we have absolute power over our lives.”
Despite laying off thousands of public workers, raising the retirement age, raising sales taxes and cutting pensions, Puerto Rico’s debt mushroomed over the last decade as the government took out loans and floated bonds, just to pay the interest on previous loans.

Even with the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour, workers have a hard time making ends meet, Juan Santana, president of the Independent Union of Airport Workers, told the *Militant* by phone from Rio Piedras, May 23. The union represents 390 workers who prepare food for flights and restaurants at the airport.

Half of the union members make only minimum wage he said, “But the cost of living keeps going up. A large number of our members are between 19 and 26

years old. Lowering the minimum wage would be a blow.”

The debt crisis and fiscal board have become an issue in the U.S. elections.

Democratic Party presidential candidate Bernie Sanders drew thousands to his campaign stops in Puerto Rico May 16. Although prohibited from voting in U.S. presidential elections, Puerto Rican residents can vote in the Democratic and Republican party primaries.

Sanders criticized setting up a fiscal board, saying “vulture funds” should take “a massive discount.” He proposed “an orderly restructuring” under the supervision of a U.S. bankruptcy court.

Sanders also joined the call for freeing Oscar López, a political prisoner and fighter for independence for Puerto Rico, who has been jailed in the U.S. for 35 years. Sanders called for yet another referendum, this time binding, to allow Puerto Rico’s residents to vote between statehood, independence or commonwealth status.

William Clinton campaigned for Hillary Clinton in Puerto Rico the day after Sanders’ visit. Hillary Clinton released a statement backing the control board bill even though she has “serious concerns about several provisions.” She said she would work to ensure that the board “includes members that will act in the best interest of Puerto Ricans.”

Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president Alyson Kennedy, who will testify in support of independence for Puerto Rico at United Nations hearings on decolonization June 20 in New York, told the *Militant* that the board “is an affront to the country’s sovereignty.”

“It puts the brunt of the crisis on the backs of working people in Puerto Rico,” Kennedy said. “Working people in Puerto Rico and the U.S. have everything to gain by fighting together for our common interests and backing the fight for independence.”

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‘Without theory there can be no revolutionary movement’

Their Trotsky and Ours by Jack Barnes is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for May. It is based on a 1982 speech by Barnes, the national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party. The book explains that to lead the working class in a successful revolution, a mass proletarian party is needed whose cadres, well beforehand, have absorbed a world communist program, are proletarian in life and work, derive deep satisfaction from doing politics and have forged a leadership with an acute sense of what to do next. The excerpt below is from the section "Marxism, Bolshevism, and the Communist International." Copyright © 2002 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY JACK BARNES

Our revolutionary political continuity, that of the modern working class, does not go back very far — only 135 years. It goes back to the generalizations adopted by the Communist League and presented in initial form in its manifesto, which [Karl] Marx and [Frederick] Engels were assigned to draft, and in its organizational rules, which they also had a major role in preparing.

The lessons drawn by the leaders of the Cuban, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, and Grenadian revolutions are part of



Militant/Fred Murphy

Feb. 17, 1980, rally for radical land reform by 30,000 peasants and farm workers in Managua, Nicaragua. Building revolutionary movement requires "generalization of lessons our class has learned," Barnes says, including experience of 1979 revolutions in Nicaragua, Grenada.

this common revolutionary continuity. But determining just what, concretely, that consists of is a little more complicated than it might seem. Because political continuity is not like the doctrine of a church, which is ultimately judged right or wrong by some body of people who claim a direct line to someone or something you can't argue with. That is how the articles of a faith are settled.

But as Engels wrote just two months before the formation of the Communist League at the end of 1847, "Communism is not a doctrine but a *movement*; it proceeds not from principles but from *facts*. ... Communism, insofar as it is a theory, is the theoretical expression of the position of the proletariat in this [class] struggle and the theoretical summation of the conditions for the liberation of the proletariat."

Communists don't have any articles of faith. What we have, as Engels explained, is simply the political generalizations and strategic lessons from the experiences of a class that has been marching toward taking power ever since it was born and began to wage battles in its own name — *the modern working class*.

This needs to be thought about, because it is alien to the way people are taught to think by the schools and other institutions under capitalism. We are trained to think in terms of ideas and individuals that float above classes and material conditions. It is easy to slip into thinking that a political program has a life of its own, like the doctrine

and rituals of a church or the masonic lodge.

These doctrines don't change until the body of people who determine them decide they should change. But that is not true of the proletariat's program, which is changed through clarification and enrichment with every major new experience in the class struggle.

Marx and Engels explained this materialist approach in the Communist Manifesto. Communists, the Manifesto explained, "do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement." They "have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole."

What, then, does distinguish communist workers from the rest of their class? On the plane of practical action, Marx and Engels say, the communists are "the most advanced and resolute section" of the working class. On the plane of program and ideas, they have "the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement."

Writing four years later to a founding member of the Communist League, then working to build the communist movement in North America, Marx explained that his own contribution to the theory of the revolutionary workers movement was not the discovery of the existence of classes or the class struggle, which many others had described and commented on. His own

new contribution, Marx said, was to demonstrate "that class struggle necessarily leads to the *dictatorship of the proletariat*."

It is only by generalizing and drawing the lessons of the actual experiences of the working class that revolutionists develop a program and strategy that can help us lead our class toward that goal — the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is where our political continuity comes from.

[V.I.] Lenin said that without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement. You hear that quotation so many times that it can sometimes lose its meaning. But it is important to think about what Lenin actually said. He didn't say that without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary *action*. That would be wrong. Horribly and disarmingly so. There can be, have been, and will continue to be revolutionary struggles by working people that are not guided by organizations equipped with revolutionary theory. Revolutionary struggles, but not a revolutionary *movement*. Because building a revolutionary movement, as opposed to action alone, necessitates a conscious generalization of lessons that our class has learned through struggle into a program and strategy, a political continuity, upon which revolutionary *organization* is based.

These lessons — what to do, and in some ways even more importantly, what not to do — have been paid for in blood many times over by our class. They are irreplaceable.

The fact that our program and strategy are rooted in the experience of the working class, however, also means that new experiences *change*, better enrich, our revolutionary continuity. They cannot alter past events, of course. But our political continuity is not frozen. It is the evolving consciousness of the vanguard of a class, expressed in program and strategy and embodied in revolutionary organizations and their cadres.

We incorporate new lessons while preserving old ones and understanding them in new ways. Our revolutionary continuity is a living thing. It is our *current* understanding of the rich lessons of revolutions and class battles that came before us, and this understanding changes as our class goes through new experiences.

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May

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OFFER GOOD UNTIL MAY 31

End US colonial rule in Puerto Rico!

The imposition of a fiscal board on Puerto Rico strips away the mask from a simple fact: the island nation is a U.S. colony.

All seven members of the board will be appointed by the president of the United States. It will have the power to veto any law passed by the Puerto Rican legislature, to order layoffs of government workers, to sell off Puerto Rican government property and to impose criminal penalties on anyone who disobeys its edicts. So much for the “self-governing” Commonwealth.

The big-business media and politicians often slander the Puerto Rican people as lazy riffraff who live off welfare and food stamps, with a corrupt government that won’t make hard decisions to pay off its creditors.

At best, they say some blame falls on “vulture” hedge funds, which bought up a chunk of the island’s bonds for as little as 30 cents on the dollar, but demand payment in full.

But the problem is not *vulture* capitalism: it’s capitalism, specifically in the form of Washington’s imperialist domination.

U.S. capitalists of all stripes reap superprofits from the colonial oppression of Puerto Rico: the giant pharmaceutical corporations that benefit from low wages and taxes on the island; the shipping companies that have a monopoly on cargo trade; agribusiness that provides 80 percent of the food because imperialist domination wiped out much of the island’s agricul-

tural production.

With the layoffs of thousands, increases in sales taxes and cuts in pensions, working people in Puerto Rico are already paying for the capitalist crisis. The fiscal board will further tighten the screws.

President Obama and leading Democratic and Republican Party politicians, including Bernie Sanders, say they are for a referendum to give the people of Puerto Rico a choice between independence, statehood or keeping its current status.

But any vote under colonial rule is a sham. What kind of free vote can there be under the watchful eye — including cops, courts, and spies — of those who benefit from Puerto Rico remaining a colony under the rule of the same imperialist government that has held independence fighter Oscar López in U.S. prisons for the last 35 years?

The Socialist Workers Party at its founding convention in 1938 opposed “any attempt by American imperialism, open or masked, to infringe upon the right of self-determination of any nation or people.”

“More than ever working people in Puerto Rico and in the U.S. have everything to gain by fighting together for our common interests and backing the fight for Puerto Rico’s independence from colonial rule,” Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president, told the *Militant*. She’s right.

Independence for Puerto Rico! Free Oscar López!

SWP campaigns among workers in Minnesota

Continued from front page

subscribed to the *Militant* took petitions to circulate.

The need for working people to act in our own class interests and the thirst for anything that can strengthen that fight was part of the discussions with many workers that Socialist Workers Party members met. “We all need to unite,” said Stephani Ayala, a former Teamsters member in an engraving plant, as she signed the petition to put the SWP on the ballot and got a subscription to the *Militant*. “Many workers don’t earn a livable wage. Workers need the Socialist Workers Party.”

During the course of gathering several hundred signatures, SWP campaigners won 31 new *Militant* subscribers and sold several books. At a May 21 campaign meeting with Kennedy and David Rosenfeld, SWP candidate for Congress, Kennedy talked about participation in a delegation to Cuba with relatives of victims of police killings. “The Cubans we met were shocked when we told them about police brutality under capitalism, and we got a real glimpse of the social relations that exist when workers and farmers make a revolution.”

Rosenfeld had been a panelist at a conference on Malcolm X earlier that day where a debate began about whether Malcolm X’s legacy was relevant only to African-Americans. “The Socialist Workers Party explains Malcolm was a revolutionary leader of the working class,” Rosenfeld said. “He transcended Black nationalism and sought to work with all who want to end exploitation and oppression. He said he was trying to awaken Black people to their worth. That message is vitally important to the working class today.”

Dan Fein, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate in Illinois, joined others talking with packinghouse workers in the parking lot outside Long Prairie Packing plant in

Long Prairie, 120 miles north of here. “I came from Miami three weeks ago, when I heard there was hiring here,” Raimundo Olvide told Fein. Several workers there signed the party petitions.

Fein also talked with dairy farmers lined up to bring livestock in. They are hard hit by low milk prices. Several have worked in factories to augment their income.

“I work on a friend’s farm now,” Dick Fenner told Fein. “I worked as a plumber and now I’m on Social Security. But after I pay the bills, there’s nothing left, so I have to work part-time.

Kennedy was invited by supporters of the Socialist Workers Party campaign to meet with 10 of their co-workers at Walmart May 23. Cashier Mary Ellen Nelson told Kennedy she and her husband can’t afford the company’s health plan, which has a \$5,000 deductible. “We would be paying off the deductible forever.”

Another worker said she was interested in Republican candidate Donald Trump for his stand against illegal immigration. “I’m not against immigration, but it has to be legal,” she said. “Those illegals are getting all the money and the jobs.”

“The bosses pit us against each other competing for jobs,” Kennedy replied. “They see immigrants as a source of cheap labor. We need to build unity among workers, to fight for a massive government-funded jobs program, for a \$15 minimum wage and against all restrictions that prevent one or another group of workers’ ability to find a job.” Eight workers signed to put the SWP on the ballot.

To join in the ballot effort or contribute to the campaign, contact party units listed on page 8 or Socialist Workers Party 2016 Campaign, 227 W. 29th St, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10001. Tel (646) 922-8186. Email: swp2016campaign@gmail.com.

LETTERS

Disagree with Israeli policy

The May 23 *Militant* focused on the rise of anti-Semitism in the Palestinian solidarity movement. Criticism of the policies of the state of Israel are not anti-Semitic. The Israeli government continues expansion of settlements in the West Bank including the recent destruction of two Bedouin villages. Then of course there is Gaza where the residents are essentially prisoners. The policies of the Is-

raeli government and the lack of leadership on both sides turn people into suicide bombers. It is not Hamas alone.

Lenore Sheridan
Berkeley, California

Agree on Jew-hatred

Many thanks for the May 23 article “The Stakes in UK Debate on Jew-hatred in Labour Party.” I am pleased to see a force in the world that adds clarity. The ev-

eryday press simply confuses us all.

Christine Hodgkinson
United Kingdom

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Mideast crisis

Continued from front page

deteriorating electricity and water services and widespread corruption, protesters have called for replacing the cabinet and ending the sectarian patronage system — with Shia, Sunni and Kurdish quotas — that Washington imposed in 2003 as part of “nation building” during its occupation of the country.

The protests have been led by Shia Muslim cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who heads an anti-working-class bourgeois nationalist current similar to Hezbollah in Lebanon or Hamas in Gaza. His base is in the poverty-stricken, majority-Shia Sadr City district of Baghdad.

The International Monetary Fund, representing the interests of U.S. finance capital, proffered another \$5.4 billion “bailout” to the Iraqi regime, with conditions: cuts in social spending, higher taxes and other “reforms” that will doubtless spark more protests.

Washington’s difficulties imposing a new order in Iraq and the region dates back to the late 1980s. As the repressive Stalinist government in the Soviet Union came apart, the “imperialist rulers had begun to loudly proclaim the defeat of communism and the birth of a ‘new world order’ — even the end of history itself — with themselves supposedly heading toward undisputed control,” wrote Socialist Workers Party leaders Jack Barnes and Mary-Alice Waters in the 1998 introduction to *New International* no. 11, a magazine of Marxist politics and theory.

In 1991 Washington and its allies, using the pretext of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein’s occupation of Kuwait, carried out six weeks of massive bombing and a 100-hour invasion of Iraq that resulted in the slaughter of some 150,000 men, women and children.

But U.S. imperialism’s war coalition came apart and it failed to set up the stable protectorate it sought. “The outcome of the Gulf War was among the first striking confirmations of the sharpening interimperialist conflict that would mark the post-Cold War world,” Barnes and Waters wrote.

After the Sept. 11, 2001, al-Qaeda-organized attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, President George W. Bush launched a war against Afghanistan, where al-Qaeda was extended sanctuary in areas dominated by the Islamist Taliban. In 2003 Washington invaded Iraq again, toppled Hussein and set up a new government. About half a million Iraqis died as a result of that war.

US lost Cold War

U.S. imperialism is paying the price in the Mideast for acting as if it had won the Cold War. The fall of the Stalinist regimes, far from opening up the world for U.S. domination, robbed Washington of its most reliable instrument for keeping a lid on working-class struggles.

Decades of Stalinist counterrevolutionary activity in the Middle East and elsewhere, directed from Moscow, helped pave the way for the hated repressive Baath Party regimes in Iraq and Syria, which dealt crushing blows to the working class while projecting themselves as the progressive, secular alternative to Islamist currents.

The Baath Party in Iraq, which called itself socialist, came to power by beheading the vanguard of the revolution that ended British domination in 1958. In the 1970s Saddam Hussein consolidated a regime based on the country’s Sunni minority and repressing the Shia and Kurdish populations. Moscow sent arms and advisors to Hussein. The Iraqi Communist Party’s sorry history includes taking part in the Baathist-dominated National Progressive Front from 1973 to 1979, and supporting the 2003 U.S. invasion.

Hussein, despite his anti-imperialist demagogy, also found favor with U.S. imperialism for some time, particularly when he launched a bloody war against Iran in 1980, the year after Iranian workers and farmers overthrew Washington’s ally the Shah.

In Syria the Communist Party (Unified) was part of Bashar al-Assad’s National Progressive Front, and while calling for reforms during mass protests against Assad that began in 2011, insisted “national unity must be ensured.”

For now, bourgeois formations such as al-Sadr’s fill the void left by Stalinist betrayals. But capitalism’s unfolding economic nightmare generates resistance to its effects among workers and farmers around the world. Given time and political space, revolutionary proletarian currents are certain to develop in the Mideast.